



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Fruit and vegetable inspection fee increase approved

OLYMPIA – The director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture today approved increasing inspection fees for numerous commodities, including apples, pears and potatoes.

In authorizing the unit-weight increase, Valoria Loveland pointed out that while there have been hourly inspection fee increases in recent years, there has been no increase in hundred-weight unit fees for 16 years.

“This increase is absolutely necessary in order to continue providing the level of service the industry requires and expects,” Loveland said. “We’re proud of the work we do for the fruit and vegetable industries and value our relationship with them. But in order to support the level of service, we have to increase these fees.”

Among other proposals, per-acre fees would increase for field or orchard inspections and the minimum charges would increase for issuing a certificate of compliance. The certificate states that a product meets state requirements for grade and condition at the time of shipping.

The new fees take effect July 1. The proposed fee increases were the subject of public hearings in Wenatchee and Yakima last month.

The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program fees for hourly rates, phytosanitary certification, minimum certification and Customer Assisted Inspection Program (CAIP) fees are not affected. The action approved today also allows a volume discount for apples and pears that are inspected and certified online for domestic shipment and controlled atmosphere certification.

Loveland said the agency has taken a number of steps in recent years to avoid fee increases and hold down costs, including closing one of its district offices in Eastern Washington in 2002, reducing management and clerical staff and implementing a computer technology system that gives industry associations and shippers easier access to data and the potential to save money through online services for certificates of compliance.

She said the agency will continue to review program costs and services to see if there is a more efficient and cost effective way to help market Washington fruits and vegetables.

“Over the next several months, we will be meeting with key players from the industry to look at our services and service delivery to ensure that we are meeting the industry’s needs – not only today, but into the future,” Loveland said.

The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program is the largest program within WSDA and faces additional cost pressures with state-mandated wage and health benefit increases in the new fiscal year (July 1). State law requires that user fees be adequate to recover costs of providing inspection or other requested services.

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